

U.S. Department of the Interior<sup>1</sup>  
Bureau of Land Management  
Uncompahgre Field Office  
2505 South Townsend  
Montrose, CO 81401

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-150-2006-0034 EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC-70126

PROJECT NAME: Montrose County Grizzly Ridge Sand and Gravel Pit

PLANNING UNIT (optional): Gunnison Gorge NCA Planning Area

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: New Mexico Principal Meridian  
SW $\frac{1}{4}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and S $\frac{1}{2}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 10, T50N, R7W,

APPLICANT: County of Montrose

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional):

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION (optional): The gravel pit is located approximately 8.7 miles southwest of Crawford. The sand and gravel pit is situated on a 9.9 acre parcel on public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Free Use Permits (FUP) are issued for a period of ten years or less for sand and gravel. Montrose County first requested a FUP on 07/01/1983. The mineral deposit was accessed and appraised by BLM specialists.

During the past 23 years, the Uncompahgre Field Office has issued four permits to Montrose County to operate the "Grizzly Ridge Pit".

The Grizzly Ridge sand and gravel pit is the only source that is locally available to the County for repair and maintenance of the County roads in the Crawford area, Road District EM-1.

The most recent permit, COC-67651, was issued for a two year period and expired on June 1, 2006.

### DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

**Proposed Action:** The County has requested a new FUP to authorize removal of 100,000 tons of construction aggregate over a ten year period. The County has proposed to crush 10,000 tons per year, beginning in 2006.

The County owned and operated equipment that will be used including a bulldozer, front-end loader, a track hoe, a water truck and dump trucks. Montrose County will contract with a professional gravel processor who will use a mobile crusher, screen, and conveyor. The crushed and sorted materials will be stored in the pit area. The processed sand and gravel will be used to upgrade and maintain Montrose County roads.

**The Preferred Alternative:** The preferred alternative would be identical to the proposed action, except that the gravel pit will be closed from November 15 through April 30 annually, unless after concurrence from the Colorado Division of Wildlife, a variance is granted by the BLM authorized officer.

**No Action Alternative:** No FUP would be issued.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: No other alternatives are being considered.

NEED FOR THE ACTION: Montrose County has a continued need for a local source of construction aggregate to use in maintenance and repair of the Montrose County gravel roads located north of Gunnison Gorge, and east of State highway 92.

REVIEW OF EXISTING NEPA DOCUMENTS:

List by name and date all existing NEPA documents that cover the Proposed Action.

Name of Document: Grizzly Ridge Gravel Pit (COC67651), CO-150-2004-DNA  
Grizzly Ridge Gravel Pit (COC63065), CO-150-1999-60 CER  
Grizzly Ridge Gravel Pit (COC55930), U-94-07 EA  
Gunnison Gorge LHA - Poison Spring Allotment

Date Approved: 04/27/2004  
06/28/1999  
11/16/1993  
FY 2001

RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS:

Additional laws governing the management of public lands include the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.: 90 Stat. 2743; P.L. 94-579), the Archeological Resource Protection Act of 1974, National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended (1980), National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, 1973 Endangered Species Act as amended, Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, the Clean Water Act of 1977 as amended, the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1984 as amended, and the Clean Air Act of 1977 as amended.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: : The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: Gunnison Gorge NCA RMP

Date Approved: November 2004

Decision Number/Page: Management Unit 4 - Gunnison Sage-Grouse ACEC/IBA  
Table 2-2.4 page 2-80, and MIN-C-5 page 2-13

Management Unit Emphasis: “Management and protection of the Gunnison sage-grouse and its habitat in the National Conservation Area (NCA) will be emphasized in the 22,200 acre management unit.”

Decision Language: “To maximize diversity of multiple uses, including human activities and opportunities while meeting or exceeding land health standards, public lands in the unit will be closed to motorized and mechanical vehicular use and travel from November 15 through April 30 annually.” (page 2-82; (REC-4-5).

The proposed action is not in conformance with the Gunnison Gorge NCA plan. Restricting gravel extraction to the period from May 1 through November 14 (See Page 2-82; REC-4-5) would bring the proposal into conformance with the GGNCA plan.

Standards for Public Land Health:

In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the *Standards for Public Land Health*. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis.

The five components of the Standard are:

Standard 1: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes. Adequate soil infiltration and permeability allows for the accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor, and minimizes surface runoff.

Standard 2: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods. Riparian vegetation captures sediment, and provides forage, habitat and bio-diversity. Water quality is improved or maintained.

Standard 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's

potential. Plants and animals at both the community and population level are productive, resilient, diverse, vigorous, and able to reproduce and sustain natural fluctuations, and ecological processes.

Standard 4: Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Standard 5: The water qualities of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the state of Colorado. Water Quality Standards for surface and ground waters include the designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria, and anti-degradation requirements set forth under State law as found in (5 CFR 1002-8).

These Standards are addressed in the appropriate Affected Environment / Environmental Impacts section of this document.

#### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

##### CRITICAL ELEMENTS

##### AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Air quality in the project area is good.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will be approximately 14 days annually when gravel is being mined, processed, sorted and stockpiled. Equipment will include a dozer, front-end loader, a portable processing unit, and a water truck. Construction aggregate will be transported from the pit on an "as needed basis" for repair or maintenance of designated County roads. A loader and dump truck will be utilized. There will be equipment noise and emissions. Dust will be generated.

Overall, impacts from mining, processing, and stockpiling are anticipated to be moderate for a short term, and minimal for the long term operation. Dust abatement activities will include working when wind conditions are calm, and applying water and/or wetting agent as needed. Noise abatement activities will include the use of muffled equipment. Emissions will be minimized by operating equipment that is properly maintained and in good condition.

There will not be any detectable effects to air quality from the proposed action, preferred alternative, or no-action alternative.

##### AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN:

Affected Environment: The proposed action falls within the Gunnison sage-grouse ACEC, which was designated for the primary purpose of management and protection of the Crawford population of Gunnison sage grouse.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed action: No restrictions on season of use for this pit are included in the proposed action. Use of the pit during the November 15 through April 30 time period would result in disturbance to wintering big game, which could result in increased mortality. It could also result in these animals being displaced to private property, generating increased controversy with landowners. Winter activities could also result in increased winter mortality of sage grouse, as well as disruption of breeding activities during the early spring months.

Preferred alternative: Impacts to the values of the ACEC would be avoided through the use of the required winter/early spring closure to gravel mining operations.

No Action: There would be no further impacts on the values of the ACEC.

Mitigation: The Preferred Alternative contains mitigation to minimize impacts to the Gunnison sage-grouse. No further mitigation is recommended.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: A Class I Literature Search was conducted to review previous inventories within the project area. One Class III survey was conducted on 15 acres in Section 9 and 10 (included the project area) in 1983. It was determined no cultural resources would be impacted by the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences: There will not be any effects on cultural resources from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

Mitigations: The permit will be made subject to a stipulation which would state that should any paleontological or archeological resources be recovered during removal of the material, the activities will cease and the authorized officer notified.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

Affected Environment: The project area is located in a rural area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will not be any effects on minority populations from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

## FARMLANDS, PRIME AND UNIQUE

Affected Environment: There are no prime and unique farmlands in the project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will not be any effects on any Prime and Unique Farmlands from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no-action alternative.

FLOODPLAINS: (includes information related to Standard 2).

Affected Environment: The gravel pit and access road is not in a floodplain.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigations: There will not be any effects on floodplains from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

## INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: During a field examination of the site April 27, 2006 Russian thistle, cheat grass, field bind weed, musk thistle and bull thistle were observed in areas of previous disturbance.

Environmental Consequences: Weeds and invasive species will be reduced over the long term under each of the three alternatives. With the Proposed Action and the Preferred Alternatives, weed control is included as part of the permit stipulations. Under the no action alternative, the weed control requirement specified in COC-67651 (issue date 06/07/04, expiration date 06/01/06) is in full force and effect until final site reclamation is accepted by BLM and Colorado State Division of Minerals and Geology (Reclamation Permit M-84-152).

### Environmental Mitigations:

The permit will be made subject to a stipulation that requires the holder to control noxious weeds. The Crushing Contractor will be required by the County to wash equipment prior to entering Grizzly Ridge gravel pit. Top soil piles, and overburden stockpiles will be seeded. Regulated species will be managed through an integrated pest management program, including herbicide control.

## MIGRATORY BIRDS (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed mining activity area provides habitat for migratory bird species that typically use sagebrush/grass communities. The priority species considered during this analysis are those found in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service' Birds of Conservation Concern (USFWS 2002). Evaluations are based on data found in the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (Kingery 1998), and the species shown below are those known to breed in the area and for which there is suitable habitat.

Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Golden eagles utilize a wide range of habitats to hunt, roost and raise young. Suitable mixes of sagebrush and cliffs, and vast expanses of open range with high populations of rabbits can support large populations (Kingery 1998). Habitat suitable for nesting occurs in the Gunnison Gorge, Red Canyon and many other areas in the general vicinity of the gravel pit. No nests were observed within a 0.5-mile buffer around the proposed project area.

Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) – Occupied nesting habitat occurs within the nearby Gunnison Gorge. Some incidental foraging in the areas near this mine site may occur. No priority foraging areas are present in the general location of the gravel mine.

Prairie Falcon- (*Falco mexicanus* )- Occupied nesting habitat occurs within the nearby Gunnison Gorge. There may be some incidental foraging in the areas near this mine.

Gunnison sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*) – The gravel pit is centrally located within high quality, occupied habitat for Gunnison sage-grouse. Active strutting grounds are located within 0.25 mile of this gravel pit.

Sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*) - This species typically utilizes low elevation big sagebrush communities. The breeding Bird Atlas (Kingery, 1998) did not find this species breeding in the sagebrush habitats in the Fruitland Mesa area.

In addition to the above species a wide variety of migrant bird species utilize the nearby sagebrush, mountain shrub, and scattered PJ habitats for breeding and brood rearing.

Impacts from the Proposed Action and Preferred alternatives are identical. Approximately 9.9 acres would continue to be impacted as a result of mining activity. Due to the fact that this proposed gravel mine would take place within the footprint of previous mining activity the potential effects to breeding bird habitat would be minimal.

Due to the small acreage involved in the gravel pit operation, and the fact that this would be a continuing operation, any impacts on the migratory bird populations on Fruitland Mesa and surrounding areas would be undetectable. There would be no violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (intentional take of migratory bird species) as a result of the implementation of this project.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to migratory birds.

Mitigation: None

#### NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS:

Affected Environment: A cultural resource inventory has been completed.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: No identified Native American religious concerns, items, or areas are located at the pit. There will be no known impacts to Native American religious concerns.

#### THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES: (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment:

Affected Environment: A list of species for Montrose County was obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service web site (<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/CountyLists/COLORADO.Htm>), and is shown below.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Present on Site
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	T	Y
Black-footed Ferret	<i>Mustela nigripes</i>	E	N
Bonytail *	<i>Gila elegans</i>	E	N
Canada Lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	T	N
Clay-loving Wild-buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum pelinophilum</i>	E	N
Colorado Pikeminnow *~	<i>Ptychocheilus lucius</i>	E	N
Humpback Chub *	<i>Gila cypha</i>	E	N
Mexican Spotted Owl	<i>Strix occidentalis</i>	T	N
Razorback Sucker *~	<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	E	N
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i> <sup>1</sup>	E	N
Uinta Basin Hookless Cactus	<i>Sclerocactus glaucuc</i>	T	N
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	C	N

\*Critical Habitat occurs downstream of this location on the Colorado River

T= Threatened Species

E= Endangered Species

C= Candidate Species

<sup>1</sup>= Occupied habitat for southwestern willow flycatchers no longer includes eastern Montrose County.

There is no designated critical habitat for any federally listed species in the project site, or within the project's zone of influence.

No species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the State of Colorado, not considered during the evaluation of federally listed species, are known to occur in the proposed gravel mining area.

BLM sensitive species with the potential to be found in the project area include: Townsend's big eared bat, fringed myotis, Yuma myotis, spotted bat, big free-tailed bat, and Gunnison sage grouse. The immediate vicinity of the project site does not provide any suitable roosting habitat for bats, but is utilized for foraging activities. Surrounding habitats are occupied, high quality, habitats for Gunnison sage grouse whose populations in this area appear to be stable.

#### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: There would be "No Effect" on any designated Critical Habitats from the proposed action.



Winter bald eagle use in this area is confined to incidental foraging. Since there are no essential habitats for this species near the gravel pit there would be “No Effect” on bald eagles.

Since sand and gravel mining, and final pit reclamation is typically done during daylight hours, it is not likely that there would be any impact to foraging bats from the operations.

As a consequence of the proposed action, Gunnison sage grouse could be subject to potential disturbance induced winter mortality and disruptions in breeding activities.

Preferred Alternative: There would be “No Effect” on any designated Critical Habitats from the Preferred Alternative.

Gunnison sage grouse would not be subject to potential disturbance induced winter mortality or disruptions in breeding activities. Otherwise, impacts from the preferred alternative would be identical to the proposed action.

No Action: There would be impacts to any Federally listed species, Critical Habitats, or BLM sensitive species.

Mitigation: The Preferred Alternative contains mitigation to minimize impacts to the Gunnison sage-grouse. No further mitigation is recommended.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered Species: (Standard 4)  
There are no impacts anticipated to land health standards for T&E species.

## WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: The motorized equipment requires the use of fuel, oil, and other lubricants for normal operation. During gravel crushing, on-site refueling is necessary, and there is a potential for a spill to occur on the floor of the gravel pit. There is also a potential for equipment failure and release of hydraulic oil, or other fluids.

### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Proposed Action:

Proposed Action: There will not be any effect on hazardous or solid wastes from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

To minimize the potential for spills or leaks, the permit will be made subject to stipulations which will limit refueling activity and restrict fuel storage.

Should an incident occur, all releases of these substances will be reported to the authorized officer, immediately cleaned up and removed. The County is the responsible party.

The County of Montrose shall comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations existing or hereafter enacted or promulgated. Any release of toxic substance (leaks, spills, discharges.) in excess of the reportable quantity established by 40 CFR, Part 117 shall be reported as required by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980,

Section 102b. A copy of any report required or requested by any Federal agency or State government as a result of a reportable concurrent with the filing of the reports to the involved Federal agency or State government.

The storage of fuel, oil or other containerized substances is prohibited on public lands.

#### WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: No surface or ground water is present within the proposed ROW.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will not be detectable effects on surface or ground water quality from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The proposed action should not result in long term impacts to water quality.

#### WETLANDS & RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetlands within the proposed project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will not be any effect on wetlands or riparian zones from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: There will not be any effects to wetlands or riparian zones. From the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

#### WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Affected Environment: There are no wild or scenic rivers in the project area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will not be any effects on wild and scenic rivers from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

#### WILDERNESS

Affected Environment: The project area is not within a wilderness area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will not be any effects on wilderness from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

#### NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS:

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

**SOILS:** (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The soils in the proposed project area are comprised of the Torriorthents-Rock outcrop, sandstone, complex. Torriorthent soils occur typically on the foot slopes and less sloping areas on mountainsides. Slopes range from 20 to 50 percent and annual precipitation is about 10 inches. These soils are usually well drained and consist of loams and sandy loams with a high content of rock. The surface layer is generally loamy and very stony, because rocks weathered from escarpments are carried down-slope by gravity. The underlying layers are sandy loam or loam and have a high content of rock fragments - many are several feet in diameter. Available water capacity is moderate to low and surface runoff is rapid. Mass wasting is common in areas of this soil map unit. Some areas where these soils occur are subject to flooding and deposition of sediment. These soils are use mainly for wildlife habitat and recreation, and have only limited value for grazing.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The gravel resource will be extracted at a rate of 10,000 tons per year for ten years. Production reports will be submitted annually, and at least two compliance inspections and reports will be conducted by the BLM.

During reclamation, over-sized rock will be place along with sorted sub soils, and top soil will be placed on the top surface. After the sand and gravel has been removed the site will be reclaimed. Native vegetation will be established.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The proposed action should not result in any impacts to these resources.

**VEGETATION** (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Vegetation in the area consists chiefly of sagebrush, oakbrush, and Utah serviceberry, perennial and annual grasses and assorted forbs. Over the life of the gravel pit, approximately 10 acres of vegetation will be removed.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: During the gravel extraction, new ground will be disturbed within the pit boundary. Top soil will be captured, moved to a storage location and the surface seeded with the prescribed native seed mix.

Best Management Practices of gravel pit development and reclamation promotes interim reclamation of areas where the gravel mining has been completed. The total area being disturbed by gravel extraction and active mining activity remains at approximately 20% of the total permit area.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial), see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): There are no impacts anticipated to animal communities. The impacts on plant communities are likely to be evident for an extended time period; however, the small size of the disturbed area is unlikely to have a detectable impact on the health of plant communities on the public land.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The pit is in dry alluvial setting

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There will be no effect on aquatic wildlife.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The gravel pit is located within crucial winter range for mule deer and elk. In order to protect these wintering animals from disturbance, the Gunnison Gorge Resource Management Plan established a winter range closure from November 15 through April 30<sup>th</sup> annually. The closure provides the benefit of reducing winter mortality resulting from human disturbance, and reducing the potential of displacing wintering animals onto private lands which could result in increased game damage claims.

The area supports typical populations of birds, mammals, and reptiles found in open sagebrush/grass communities in the Montrose/Delta county area. Species such as mountain bluebirds, broad-tailed hummingbirds, horned larks, coyotes, cottontail rabbits, least chipmunk, and horned toads have been recorded in this area.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation:

Proposed Action: During mining activity, local wildlife would be displaced from the immediate area; the distance of that displacement would be species dependent. Wintering big game could suffer stress induced mortality as a consequence of gravel pit operations during crucial winter periods. Big game animals could also be displaced to private lands resulting in increased conflicts with private land activities and resources.

There is some potential for direct mortality of species which are unable to leave the area, or species such as snakes which may not be tolerated by miners. Due to the previous mining activity at this location, and the proximity of the County Road, the habitat values of the site are already compromised. Additional mining activity in the same location is unlikely to result in any detectable impacts to local habitat values.

Preferred Alternative: Impacts resulting from this alternative are identical to those of the proposed action, except that there would be no impacts to wintering big game animals from gravel mining activities because of the November 15 through April 30 closure.

No Action Alternative: Since this is a recurring activity, there would be no additional impacts to terrestrial wildlife after the gravel pit has been reclaimed.

Mitigation: The Preferred Alternative contains mitigation to minimize impacts to the Gunnison sage-grouse. No further mitigation is recommended.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The proposal would have no detectable effect on meeting land health standards for Standard 3.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, those brought forward for analysis will be formatted as shown above.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access	X		
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals			X
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement	X		
Paleontology	X		
Noise			X
Range Management			X
Realty Authorizations	X		
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics	X		
Transportation	X		
Visual Resources			X

## GEOLOGY AND MINERALS

Affected Environment: The Grizzly Ridge Pit has been in operation and produced gravel for over 25 years. Aggregate from the pit is used to maintain Montrose County roads and is the only source of gravel for the County in the area. The gravel is from Quaternary colluvial deposits.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: Under the proposed action, a maximum of 100,000 tons of construction aggregate would be removed from the pit between 2006 and 2016. Removal of the sand and gravel will not significantly impact the mineral values in the area.

## NOISE

Affected Environment: An increase in noise levels occurs during mining operations. Sound levels in the project area fluctuate with temperature, humidity, and wind. The gravel pit is located on public lands with residences located to the south east and north within 1 mile of the pit.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The topography provides a natural barrier to sound transmission. Short term use of the pit during the year will not cause an impact by noise generated during the two week period of use.

## RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The 9.9 acre permit area is included in Poison Spring Grazing Allotment #05014. The allotment is comprised of 1,365 acres of public land. Allotment lies approximately 6 miles south of Crawford. The topography consists of mesa land cut by a few draws, which includes the Poison Spring Gulch, which flows north Westerly. The allotment is mainly a northern exposure. Elevation ranges between 7,200' and 7,830'. The dominant vegetation is black sage brush, mountain shrubs and pinon juniper.

40 Cattle.....5/2-6/30.....65% P.L.....50 Active AUMs

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: There would be any effect on rangeland from the proposed action, the preferred alternative, or the no action alternative.

## RECREATION

Affected Environment: The public occasionally uses the gravel pit in the fall to sight in rifles or handguns. It is not an authorized use. Horse trailers are occasionally parked at the entrance to the pit, but there is no trail system, or recreational destination in the vicinity of the pit. The Black Canyon road is closed north of the pit from December 1 through April 30 eliminating snowmobile use.

Environmental Consequences/Mitigation: The proposed action has little if any impact on the recreational values of the area. Cumulative impacts to recreation are low. No mitigation efforts were identified as advisable or necessary.

## VISUAL RESOURCE

Affected Environment: Black Canyon road provides access to the North Rim of the Black Canyon National Park. The gravel pit access road intersects Black Canyon Road. The gravel pit is located below the elevation of the Black Canyon Road, and is not visible from the Black Canyon Road. In addition, dense vegetation including grass, forbs, mature shrubs and pinon trees surround the pit and access road and provide an effective visual buffer.

On the east side of Poison Springs Gulch, a stretch of Poison Spring gravel road provides a view of the surface topography and Grizzly ridge pit is visible.

Fugitive dust plumes could be created during mining, crushing, or loading. Dust could be observed from a greater distance than the gravel pit and pit access road.

### Environmental Consequences/Mitigation

The County has demonstrated effective dust abatement practices at the permitted West end gravel pit, including sprinkling water on material that is being processed and spraying down driving surfaces. COC-70126 Exhibit A (Special Stipulations) address dust control standards.

Compliance inspections are conducted at a minimum of twice a year. Visual resource reference photos are taken from the Poison Spring vantage point. The proposed action, preferred alternative and no-action would have temporary, or minor impacts to this non-critical element.

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY:** Cumulative impacts are the environmental impacts that could result from the proposed activity, added to the impacts from all other activities, regardless of who is conducting such activity. A FUP must be assessed cumulatively with all the other activities on private, state and federal lands. For the purpose of this EA, the area considered for the cumulative effects analysis is the area surrounding the proposed Grizzly Ridge Gravel Pit in Montrose County within a 5-mile radius. The primary existing disturbances in the area include the existing gravel pit, roads, and development of private property for residential or agricultural development.

All current and future projects and disturbances from this gravel pit could add sediment to Poison Springs Gulch, down slope from the pit. Storm water management practices, implementation of the required mitigation measures and best management practices for gravel pit development and reclamation would minimize the cumulative effects. The cumulative impacts from this project to vegetation, soil and visual resources such as habitat fragmentation and erosion would be temporary until the pit is reclaimed and vegetated. Use of measures to manage invasive weeds would prevent cumulative impacts from weed infestations. The cumulative impacts to traffic would be associated with the annual mobilization of gravel processing equipment, transportation and delivery of construction aggregate from the Grizzly Ridge Pit.

The incremental impacts of this action, when added to other past, present and future actions would be minimal and thus their cumulative impacts would be negligible.

### **LITERATURE CITATIONS**

Kingery, H.E., Editor. 1998. Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership and Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver, CO.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2002. Birds of Conservation Concern; <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/reports/bcc2002.pdf> , Ft. Collins, CO.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2006. List of Endangered, Threatened, and Candidate Species for Montrose County; <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/endspp/CountyLists/COLORADO.htm>. Ft. Collins, CO.

BLM. 2001. Gunnison Gorge Landscape Health Assessment. Uncompahgre Field Office, Montrose, CO.

### **PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:**

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Area of Responsibility</u>
Lynn Lewis	Geologist	Geology
Jim Ferguson	Biologist	Wildlife, T&E
Danna Knox	Environmental Protection Spec.	Surface Compliance



**FONSI**  
**CO-150-2006-0034 EA**

The environmental assessment analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action has been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

RATIONALE: This EA adequately analyzed the proposed action including reasonable alternatives and assessed the impacts of the proposed project. I do not believe that an EIS would provide any new data.

**DECISION RECORD**

DECISION: It is my decision to select the preferred alternative and the recommended mitigation measures contained in the EA. Accordingly, BLM will grant Free Use Permit (FUP) COC-70126 under FLPMA to the County of Montrose for the existing Grizzly Ridge Gravel Pit.

This gravel permit area will be 9.9 acres in size.

The County of Montrose is requesting to extend the existing FUP for 10 years on the Grizzly Pit. The County has requested 100,000 tons of sand and gravel that will be used for repair and maintenance of County roads.

The term of this permit would be 10 years and would be renewable.

RATIONALE: The County continues to plan to operate the Grizzly Ridge Gravel Pit.

MITIGATION MEASURES: The FUP will be made subject to the attached stipulations.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: BLM will monitor the project construction and conduct compliance examinations throughout the life of the project.

NAME OF PREPARER: Danna Knox

DATE: 7/12/06

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Amanda Clements

DATE: 8/3/06

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Barbara Sharrow

DATE: 8/3/06

ATTACHMENTS: Permit stipulations and Grizzly Ridge gravel permit area map

MITIGATION MEASURES (SPECIAL STIPULATIONS)

- 1) Yearly production figures shall be reported during January of each year.
- 2) The permittee shall comply with all applicable Federal laws and regulations existing or hereafter enacted or promulgated. In any event, the permittee shall comply with the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, as amended (15 USC 2601, et seq.) with regard to any toxic substances that are used, generated by or stored on the permit area authorized under this permit. (See 40 CFR, Part 702-799 and especially, provisions on polychlorinated biphenyls, 40 CFR 761.1-761.193). Additionally, any release of toxic substance (leaks, spills, etc.) in excess of the reportable quantity established by 40 CFR, Part 117 shall be reported as required by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, Section 102b. A copy of any report required or requested by any Federal agency or State government as a result of a reportable concurrent with the filing of the reports to the involved Federal agency or State government. No toxic or hazardous material may be present on site. The storage of leaking equipment, fuel, oil or other containerized substances is prohibited on public lands. All releases of these substances will be reported to the authorized officer, immediately cleaned up and removed by the county
- 3) Permittee is responsible for all suppression costs for any fire resulting from their operations and practices.
- 4) Permittee is responsible for disposing of all debris in accordance with state and federal regulations. Permittee is responsible for keeping the material site free of all litter and trash.
- 5) If any paleontological or archaeological resources be recovered during removal of the material, the activities will cease and the authorized officer notified. The permittee shall not remove, injure, deface or alter any object of scenic, historic or scientific interest, including Indian ruins, pictographs and other archaeological remains.
- 6) The topsoil (at least six inches) shall be removed and stockpiled for pit rehabilitation measures. This stockpiled material shall be stabilized with a cover crop of the seedmix listed below.
- 7) When excessive dust conditions exist, dust abatement measures including but not limited to watering will be used to reduce or eliminate dust caused by operations authorized by this permit.

- 8) Between operations, the disturbed area shall be maintained at a slope ratio not to exceed 3:1 or bermed, so as to minimize slope failure and erosion as well as public safety hazards.
- 9) Pit rehabilitation shall consist of, but not be limited to, the following requirements:
- The Uncompahgre Field Office shall be contacted five (5) days prior to the commencement of reclamation.
  - Some rejected oversized material will be buried in the excavation prior to rehabilitation and some of the oversized will be scattered over the pit.
  - The pit walls shall be sloped to existing contours not to exceed 3:1 and compatible with the surrounding landforms.
  - The pit area and access routes are to be disked or ripped to a depth of at least 12 inches, with a spacing of no more than 12 inches to loosen compacted soils.
  - The disturbed areas shall be mulched with weed free hay or straw or other suitable material to a depth of three inches.
  - Stockpiled topsoil shall be spread evenly over the sides and bottom of the pit excavation.
  - Disturbed areas shall be reclaimed as soon as mined out, unless they are used for pit operations.
- 10) Revegetation seeding will be done in the fall before the ground freezes. There shall be no primary or secondary noxious weed seed in the seed mixture. Seed shall be tested and the viability testing of seed shall be done in accordance with State laws. Commercial seed shall be either certified or registered seed. The seed mixture container shall be tagged in accordance with State laws and available for inspection by the Authorized Officer. Any changes to the seed mix must be approved by the Authorized Officer. The area shall be revegetated using a seed mixture of:

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>% of Mix</b>	<b>PLS</b>	<b>#/Acre</b>
Western Wheatgrass var Arriba	12	8.0	0.96
Slender Wheatgrass var San Luis	12	5.5	0.66
Mountain Brome var Bromar	12	12.5	1.5
Big Bluegrass var Sherman	12	1.5	0.18
Bottlebrush Squirreltail	12	8.0	0.96
Canada Wildrye	12	7.0	0.94
American Vetch	6	10.0	0.6
Rocky Mountain Penstemon	6	1.5	0.09
Western Yarrow	6	1.0	0.06

Total application rate for incorporated seed 5.95 #/acre  
 Double this rate if seed is aerial broadcast and not incorporated

Reclamation of the site will be considered successful when the soil is stable and the revegetated plant community is 75% of the surrounding cover.

- 11) The permittee shall be responsible for control of invasive weeds on the permit area. The permittee is responsible for consultation with the authorized officer and/or local authorities for approved weed control methods, selection of approved/authorized herbicides and surfactants, application rates and the annual use report submission. The Montrose County Weed Manager must have a current approved Pesticide Use Proposal prior to herbicide treatment activity. Grizzly Ridge Pit shall be included in the annual County wide summary of herbicide treatment on public land.
- 12) Prior to beginning operations in the pit, a copy of the approved CDMG permit must be submitted to the Uncompahgre Field Manager. Any amendments, changes or revisions to the CDMG permit must be submitted to the Uncompahgre Field Manager at the time of the revision.
- 13) The permittee agrees to the employment of any other practices as prescribed by the authorized officer which will enhance and protect the public interests and which may be prescribed after due investigation of the circumstances.
- 14) The pit boundaries will be identified by visible boundary markers.
- 15) The gravel pit will remain closed between November 15 and April 30 annually, unless, after concurrence from the Colorado Division of Wildlife, a variance is granted by the authorized officer.